

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The invention provides peer-to-peer messaging techniques in a networked environment such as the Internet that involves a firewall. In accordance with one preferred aspect of the invention there is provided an agent and a router. In accordance with another preferred aspect of the invention, participating agents register with a router. After a registration, each agent is assigned a unique ID by the router connected to it. A receiving agent protected by a firewall establishes a connection with the router by initiating a communication with the router through the firewall. A sending agent sends a message to the receiving agent by first forwarding the message to the router connected to the sending agent. The invention allows the nodes in a network not only to send messages to other nodes through the firewall, but also to receive messages from other nodes through the firewall. The invention also allows anonymous messaging by enabling a sending agent to initiate a connection to a router and use the connection to send messages to or receive messages from other agents. A router may not include an sending agent's IP address, or other information that may reveal identification of the sending agent, in routed messages in order to protect anonymity of the sending agent.

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